

I Want To Know What Love Is (I Want You To Show Me) by reitvelds

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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Summary:

"Will didn't have a date to the Snowball. That was okay – technically, neither did the others, but Lucas and Max were basically going together, Dustin would find some girl willing to dance with him, and Mike.... No. Nope. Not thinking about Mike. Will could live with it, live through it, though. He never expected to get a date to this dance, and he doubted he would get one to any dance through his time at school. Girls didn't want to dance with Zombie Boy Byers, and, frankly, he didn't want to dance with them."

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Author's Note:

there i fixed it for u. @ the suffer brothers stop trying to make straight will happen, it's not going to happen! thanks for reading, and enjoy!

Will Byers tugged anxiously at his straight, dark fringe as he gazed in the bathroom mirror and pondered the pros and cons of running a comb through it one last time. His mom and Jonathan were waiting in the living room, he knew, Jonathan with camcorder in hand, replacing his usual camera, his mom bouncing with excitement. They would want to fuss and coo over him in his suit and his mom would straighten his tie for the hundredth time and tell him how handsome he looked, and Jonathan would film the whole thing no matter how much Will begged him to stop, and it would be cosy and familial and nice. But he just needed to be alone for a second. Just for a second.

Will didn't have a date to the Snowball. That was okay – technically, neither did the others, but Lucas and Max were basically going together, Dustin would find some girl willing to dance with him, and Mike.... *No. Nope. Not thinking about Mike.* Will could live with it, live through it, though. He never expected to get a date to this dance, and he doubted he would get one to any dance through his time at school. Girls didn't want to dance with Zombie Boy Byers, and, frankly, he didn't want to dance with them. His heart ached a little as he contemplated his future – hundreds of school dances throughout high school where he'd watch his friends with a changing roster of girls, picking them up, taking pictures on their staircases, getting them drinks, slow-dancing with them to cheesy music. Will would sit on the bleachers, maybe take the pictures, get the drinks, that kind of thing. If a girl came up and asked to dance, he'd tell her no. He'd try not to look at Mike. Oh God, he'd try so hard not to do that, but he knew he still would.

“Will! Are you coming, baby?”

“Yeah, Mom. Be right there.” Will glanced in the mirror one last time. Tried for a smile.

“Hey, looking good, man,” Jonathan smiled as Will entered the living room.

“Thanks,” he replied, trying to make it convincing. Just for tonight, please God, let it be convincing. *And what about after tonight? Because you know, this isn’t the end. The pretending’s only gonna get harder from here on in. Now that she’s here, you’ll never be able to get away from it again, from what you are, from what he isn’t. He doesn’t love you, and neither will anyone else once they find out what you are.* Will swallowed. Everything else he’d taken back with him from that place had gone away, but that voice...that voice had remained. Maybe it had always been there, even before the Upside Down.

The gym was already crowded with middle school kids, huddled in awkward little circles under the blue and white streamers. Jonathan went to set up his camera and Will looked around for the others, spotting Max and Lucas almost immediately by her red hair. Grateful not to be alone, he crossed the room as quickly as possible to get to them, but skidded to a halt when he realised, too late, who was sat at the table next to them with his dark head cast down. *Well, you’ll have to see him sometime. Might as well be now.*

“Hey, Will. You look nice,” Max smiled, and Will smiled back. God, his face was going to ache by the end of tonight. Lucas grinned too. Him and Max stood shoulder to shoulder, the barest sliver of daylight between them, and they both kept sneaking glances when they thought the other wasn’t looking. Will tried to be happy for them, but the selfish sickly swirl of jealousy in his stomach told him better. *You can’t even be happy for them. How disgusting are you? You can’t even feel happy for your nice, normal friends.*

“Hey, Will,” Mike greeted him too, raising his head. Will’s heart clenched. It was easier at school, at his house, in Mike’s basement. Easier to pretend that when Mike looked at him, smiled at him, touched him, he was feeling the same thing Will was. But here, in this obviously romantic setting, the glaring lack behind the actions became more obvious. It would never happen, *could* never happen. *Because Mike is good and right and normal, not a freak like you.* Mike

smiled, though Will thought his eyes looked sad. “Nice tie. Your mom pick it out?”

“Funny. Love the jumper, really compliments your eyes,” Will fired back, resisting the urge to tell Mike just how good he really looked. And boy, did he look good – dorky, but good. Mike’s smile widened, and Will felt himself start to blush. *Oh please, no. Not tonight. Let me not feel it tonight.*

“Thanks. My mom actually *did* pick this out,” Mike said, looking down at the jumper, and Will snorted with laughter.

“Well done, Mrs Wheeler. You found it. The ugliest jumper in existence.”

Mike playfully punched Will on the arm, laughing. “Shut up, Byers. At least my mom didn’t iron my hair.”

“How dare you, I ironed it myself.” They both grinned and giggled at each other. Will liked this part – the silly, laughing, easy part. It was harder when they stopped laughing and Mike just stared at him with that *soft* look in his dark brown eyes and a slight smile playing around his lips, that look that made Will’s pulse quicken and his face grow hot like he had a fever. Like he was sick. *You are sick.*

“What? I got something on my face?” Will forced himself to say, lightly, smiling. Mike shook his head.

“No, nothing,” he muttered, looking away, the smile gone. The room was glaringly bright and warm from the dancing bodies filling it, but to Will the lights dimmed and the air chilled like the sun had gone in. The moment was gone. *What moment? He just smiled at you. It’s all in your head, kid.*

They sat in awkward silence as they waited for Dustin, and Will occasionally thought he felt eyes on him, Mike’s eyes glancing at him and then away. He dismissed it. Everyone stared at him these days; Zombie Boy couldn’t go outside without being looked at. When Dustin finally showed up, they all had a good laugh at the hair, but Will’s laughter felt strained even to him. Everywhere he looked, there were couples dancing, happy carefree kids who felt *right* and *normal*,

things he could never feel. Max and Lucas left to dance, grinning at each other as they held each other at awkward arms length. Even Dustin eventually disappeared to find a dance partner, leaving Mike and Will wonderfully, awfully alone together at the table. Will fidgeted and examined the table cloth carefully, determined not to look at Mike again. *What, you think if you stop looking long enough, it'll go away – not just him, but all of it? The way the others like Princess Leia, but you like Han Solo, or how you don't get why they stare at Jennifer Hayes at recess, all the conversations about girls you don't know how to join in with, or your dad calling you a fag when he caught you drawing -*

“Will?” Will raised his head slowly at the call of his name, but it wasn't Mike who said it. A dark haired girl in a blue dress stood at the table, and it took Will a moment to remember – Alice Templeton, from Art Club. She gave him a shy smile. “Do you want to dance?”

Will looked from Alice, to Mike, and back. He didn't want to say no – Alice was nice, and she looked so hopeful. *Maybe you should say yes. Maybe she'll cure you.* But there was a look in Mike's eyes that gave Will pause as he turned to look at his best friend – some sadness, maybe, some confusion – some pain. *He just misses her. This isn't about you.* But Will took the mental excuse gratefully – if he got up to dance, Mike would be left alone at the table, while all around him his friends danced and the girl he liked was at home, forced to hide. That wouldn't be fair. God knew, Will knew all about *that* kind of jealousy.

“Sorry, Alice, I'm not really feeling so good right now – maybe later?” Will rattled off. Alice's face fell, and he felt a pang of guilt, but she nodded.

“Okay, sure. Maybe later.”

“Thanks for asking, though.” He gave her a smile, an *it's nothing personal* smile, and she gave an *it's okay, I don't mind* smile right back as she turned and walked away.

“What the hell, dude?”

“What?”

“Why didn’t you say yes? Alice Templeton is totally cute.”

Will shrugged, a dagger in his heart from Mike calling her ‘cute’, though his face fought not to show it. “She’s nice but...not my type.” That seemed like a good enough excuse, he’d heard the others say things like that before. Mike’s face twisted for a second, and Will began to feel sick again. The others were all totally oblivious, but Will sometimes felt Mike could see through him, right through him, into his heart. The way he was looking at him now...like Will was a particularly difficult Math question, or one of Bob’s puzzles, to be probed and investigated and figured out. Mike shook his head suddenly.

“You didn’t say no because of that. Tell me the truth. *Tell me, Will.*”

I can’t. God help me, I can’t. Please drop it Mike, please please please drop it. “I don’t know...I just don’t want to dance, is all.” He looked down at the tablecloth again, focusing on the individual threads, shining in the lights.

“Yeah, you do. You’ve been staring out at the dance-floor all night...when you haven’t been fascinated by the tablecloth. Hey, look at me, man.” Will forced his head up. Mike’s eyes bored into his, brown so dark they were almost black. His freckles stood out starkly on his pale skin. “This is dumb. If you want to dance, just dance.” How could Will explain, that he didn’t want to dance with some girl, he wanted to dance with *Mike*, and not have everyone stare and snigger, for it to just be like it was with Max and Lucas and all the other kids. *Normal*. He wanted Mike to pick him up from his house, for them to wear matching ties and buttonholes and take awkward pictures like the other couples. Will opened his mouth, as if to finally say it, but the words stuck in his throat. Mike sighed and stood up, and for one awful moment Will thought he had simply had enough, that he was just going to walk away and leave Will sitting there alone. Then he held out his hand.

“Dance with me.”

“I – w-what are you -”

“Come on, Will. Dance with me.” The music had changed. It was a

slow one, this time. Will felt his heart began the familiar pounding, his face glowing, but this time, it didn't feel like sickness. He got to his feet slowly, even as the voice in his head screamed at him to stop, told him that everyone would stare, would laugh, would *know*, that Dustin and Lucas and Max would hate him, that Mike was just playing a joke on him.... Will ignored it. He looked at Mike, kept looking at Mike and no-one else as he placed his hand into his.

Mike led him to the dance-floor, and thank God, because Will's legs were so weak he felt he might collapse. Mike's hand in his was warm and electric, sending shivers up his arm and down his spine. When he turned to face him and placed a hand on Will's waist, he jumped halfway to the ceiling. Mike grinned. "Take it easy."

"Sorry," Will said quickly, blushing even more. Mike grinned even wider and took Will's other hand, guiding into place on Mike's shoulder. They both stopped holding hands at the same time and stepped a little closer, so they were stood with one hand on each other's back, Will's other hand at Mike's shoulder, and Mike's cupping Will's waist.

"I – Mike, I don't understand. I thought – Eleven –"

Mike's face was the picture of innocent confusion. "What? No, Will –" Red crept into his cheeks, and he was suddenly shyer than Will had ever seen him. He dropped his gaze, and then glanced up at Will through his long lashes. "It's you. It's....always been you." Will could do nothing but gaze at him in dumbfounded adoration. *It's always been you. It's always been you too, Mike.*

By now, some of the other kids had started to notice them. Will heard sniggers, whispers, and glanced around anxiously, but Mike shook his head.

"Don't look at them. Look at me. Just look at me, Will." His voice was so full of warmth and reassurance; his eyes, his smile, so soft and gentle that Will thought he might cry. "Trust me?" Mike asked.

Will took a deep, shaky breath. "Yeah. Always." The song that had started playing as they got up reached the chorus, and Will suddenly recognised it.

I wanna know what love is,

I want you to show me...

Mike and Will made eye contact and giggled a little. "This is so *cheesy*," Will complained over the music, voice wobbly with happiness.

"Yeah, but fun, right?"

Will nodded enthusiastically. Never in his life had he wanted a song not to end so badly, even a crappy ballad like this one. Mike was so close, he could feel the warmth of his body, see all his freckles and blushes as they swayed together, ignoring the other students. Will had lost all awareness of his surroundings, nothing existed but the deep brown of Mike's eyes framed by his long, soft lashes. There was no-one in the world but the two of them. *You're dancing with Mike. Mike's arms are around you and he's slow dancing with you in front of Dustin and Lucas and Jonathan and Max and the whole damn school, and he's looking at you like you're a miracle, like you're the most beautiful thing he's ever seen, and he doesn't hate you or think you're disgusting or wrong. He feels the same. He feels the same.*

Mike's expression turned uncertain, a little scared, but he leaned in closer to Will all the same, roses blooming in his cheeks. Will saw what was coming and leaned back a little, suddenly all too aware of the other kids in the gym. No doubt every eye in the room was on them right now. Will didn't dare look around.

"Mike. We can't. People will see, they'll -"

"Who cares? Let them see." His eyes were shining brighter than the fairy lights strung over their heads. Will felt a thrill of....fear? No. Adrenaline. Excitement.

"Yeah," he said, his voice dim over the rush of his blood. "Let them see." They both leaned in this time, and Will remembered that people in movies closed their eyes, so he did that. Mike's lips were unfathomably soft, warm, *good*. Will gasped, mouth opening a little, and Mike cupped his bottom lip *ever so gently* between both of his, his hands pulling Will closer to his chest. Will's own hands went up to

tangle in Mike's soft, soft dark hair, their noses bumping, lips pressed tight together. *Mike Wheeler's kissing you, he's kissing you, he's kissing you...* Dimly, he heard a few gasps, titters, whispered comments and louder insults. He ignored them.

Will had never felt so safe and loved and *good* as when he pulled away, finally breaking the kiss, and opened his eyes to Mike Wheeler's smiling, pink-flushed face. Tears sprang into his eyes again, and Mike frowned, face full of sweet concern.

"Will? Are you okay? Did I do something wrong?"

"No, no, this is perfect – I just – I thought -"

"What? Tell me, Will, it's okay..." Mike had both his hands on Will's shoulders, staring concerned and loving into his face.

"I guess I just thought – I thought that it would feel – *dirty*, somehow. *Wrong*. I don't know -" He looked at Mike in mute appeal.

"Did it?"

"N-no..." Will took a deep breath, smiling even through the tears. "It felt *wonderful*." Mike grinned in relief.

"Yeah, I know. Me too. I mean – for me, too. It felt wonderful." Mike brushed a tear from Will's blushing cheek with a thumb, smiling shyly. "Wanna – uh – try it again?"

Will nodded. This time, when they kissed, he heard nothing. No voice, no laughter or shocked gasps or whispers. His world shrank to soft lips and soft hair under his hands and Mike's body, solid and warm and reassuring, against his. Nothing else existed, nothing needed to. Will Byers was finally, truly, *home*.